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Political Systems of Pastoral Tuareg

In the introductory chapter on the Tuareg I mentioned that they fall into a number of main groups. These groups or federations constitute the largest political units and are the following:— the *Kel Ahaggar*, the *Kel Ajjer*, the *Kel Adrar*, the *Kel Ayr*, the *Kel Geres*, the *Iwllemmeden Kel Dennek*, and the *Iwllemmeden Kel Ataram*. The federation of *Kel Tademekket* in the region of Timbuktu was subjected to the *Iwllemmeden Kel Ataram* from about A.D. 1800 (cf. Richer 1924, p. 96). In this chapter I attempt to outline the structure of some of the federations, and to consider certain problems connected with their historical development.

The two groups of Northern Tuareg which are so intimately related to one another, both culturally and linguistically, formed originally one large political group under the command of the very powerful noble tribe, the *Imenan* in the region of Gunet. It was not only considered noble to a very high degree, but it was very highly estimated because of its supposed relationship to the Prophet. Many noble Tuareg to-day, both in Ahaggar and in Ayr, will claim themselves to be *Echcherifen* through relationship to the ancient *Imenan*, whose leader was the supreme chief of all Tuareg of Ahaggar and Tasilé-n-Ajjer until about A.D. 1650 or somewhat later in the 17th century. The *Imenan* about that date lost their power owing to insurrections led by the powerful noble tribe, the *Uraren*. A Tuareg of this tribe killed the supreme chief named *Guma* and the leadership of the *Kel Ajjer* now passed over to the chief of the *Uraren*.

The political system of the Northern Tuareg in the 19th century has been described in some detail by Duveyrier with particular reference to the *Kel Ajjer* among whom he lived in 1859 (cf. Duveyrier 1864). Among the authors who visited the Northern Tuareg in the 19th century Duveyrier is by far the most important, and his brief description of political organization is of particular value.

When the *Imenan* lost their supreme authority owing to the rising of the *Uraren*, they retained their titles of *Imenukalen* (sing. *Amenukal*), which are used for all descendants of the *Imenan*, their women even to-day being known as *Timenukalin* (sing. *Tamenukalt*). The chief of the *Imenan* was still "the *Amenukal*", a title used for supreme and independent chiefs of large political units. It is a word known to all Tuareg, and there have been some discussion about its proper meaning. The meaning according to Duveyrier is "the owner of the land" (Duveyrier 1864, p. 331), and this interpretation is that generally followed by modern authors (e.g., Lhote 1955, p. 189; Blanguernon 1955, p. 47), though Foucauld does not go into the proper meaning of the word *Amenukal* but contents himself with the statement that it is the title of "a chief who is not subjected to any other chief" (Foucauld 1951–52, III, p. 1213 f.). According to Prasse *Amenukal* is very probably a composit of

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with the immigration of the noble *Ti-n-Hinan* tribes which were, perhaps, related to the northern *Hawwara* Berbers. These may have influenced also the *Iwllemmeden* Tuareg who possess some of the traits common to Northern Tuareg and Arabs. The *Hawwara* tribes came under Arab influence at very early stage, and they may have adopted Arab traits before they migrated southwards to settle close to the veiled *Lemta* (cf. p. 409 f.).

It is evident that the origin of pastoral political systems dates back to pre-Islamic times, but it is also very clear that political organization has been much influenced by Islam and the Arabs. With Islam and the Arabs came into political life such important classes as the *Ineslemen*, the *Echchikhen*, and the *Ichcherifen*, which has made the political organization more complex. Also introduced with Islam was the *sadakat* fee, which in its origin was a purely religious payment. It is also clear that the rules of blood-wealth payment among the Northern Tuareg (cf. p. 102) were introduced with Islam, for the Arabs of Northern Sahara, like the Northern Tuareg, give one hundred she-camels for a slain man, and the same payment is fixed by learned Islamic jurists (cf. Schram-Nielsen 1945, p. 58 f.). These rules of blood-wealth payment do not seem to have been accepted among the Ayr Tuareg where there was no fixed amount of camels to be paid for a homicide. Finally the title *Khalifa* given to tribal deputies was doubtless introduced with Islam and the Arabs. This title is used among the Northern Tuareg and also among the *Iwllemmeden Kel Dennek*.

The problems connected with the origin of the drum-group, the most important political group, are very complicated. It is well known that the drum plays an important part as an insignia of kings and other supreme chiefs over large parts of Africa. The distribution of the drum as an insignia of kings and chiefs has been studied in some detail by Schilde and Wieschhoff, and later by Irstam (cf. Schilde 1930, p. 117 ff.; Wieschhoff 1933, p. 119 ff., map 34; Irstam 1944; p. 28, 101 ff.). Wieschhoff points out that the drum as a royal insignia is pre-Islamic in Africa, and that it mainly has this particular function in state organizations of the so-called Erytrean Cultures.

The drum which constitutes the insignia of a Tuareg drum-chief is known as *ettebel* or *ettebel*. In all Tuareg groups this word is also used for "drum-group", and among the *Kel Ayr* and the *Kel Geres* it is also a title of drum-chiefs. The word *ettebel* is undoubtedly derived from the Arabic word *tobol* (cf. Foucauld 1951–52, IV, p. 1922), which is also sometimes used for Tuareg drums as it is for drums of chiefs among the Western Moors (Dubié 1947, p. 173). Formerly, the Sultan of the Fezzan also had a drum which according to Lyon was known as *tubbel*. Lyon never saw a drum of this kind but he says that they are found in all towns south of Murzuk (Lyon 1821, p. 248 f.). The drums used by Tuareg chiefs are always of a very particular form, generally known to anthropologists as "the kettle-drum", and this particular drum among the Tuareg is never used by persons other than the chiefs. For ordinary music the Tuareg have other drum types or use a wooden mortar suspended by a piece of skin. It is most interesting that the so-called kettle-drum is a very late type among the many kinds of drums found in Africa.

In regard to the distribution of kettle-drums in Africa, Sachs says that they are found in Islamic North Africa, in the Sudan, and in North-East Africa (Sachs 1929, p. 247). According to Wieschhoff kettle-drums have a more limited distribution being found only in the Sudan and in North-East Africa including Ethiopia (Wieschhoff 1933, p. 40, map 29e). As to the distribution of kettle-drums outside

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be a very strict avoidance relationship between them. However, the slave-mother has no right to inherit (*tekachit*) the livestock left on the death of her Tuareg daughter, but a certain amount of stock will be given her under the designation of *elhaḳḳ*. The Tuareg girl will not inherit her slave-mother, nor will she have the right to a number of her animals.

The above examples indicate the main structural features of Tuareg slavery. Most important among them is the position of slaves as children of their masters, though it should be stated that the rules of behaviour between owner and slaves are not necessarily like those valid for parents and children. A young slave owner will not be rough with his old slaves, but will generally behave very kindly towards them, refraining from giving them orders in the way he would command his younger slaves. Age distinctions play a great rôle in relationships between Tuareg and their slaves, and a description of Tuareg slavery should not only outline its structure but also underline the fact that we cannot establish very fixed rules for the relationship between Tuareg and slaves, as it varies very much with individuals. Some slave-owners treat their very young slaves almost like their own children, while other slave-owners do not. Some Tuareg are constantly talking disparagingly about their slaves while outwardly appearing to be very kind to them. There are many facets of Tuareg slavery.

The position of slaves as children of their owners causes slaves to belong not only to particular families and family groups, but also to tribes and, in a certain sense, even to classes. I have often noticed this in Ahaggar where tribes within the same class frequently have an attitude towards each other which is described by the Tuareg word *inmeñhaṛen*, that is "to have a feeling of envy or jealousy towards somebody". *Inmeñhaṛen* is rather an attitude of reserve and outward respect than a kind of avoidance. People of tribes or sub-tribes which have *inmeñhaṛen* relationships to one another will not visit each others' camps except on certain occasions when dressed in their best clothes, and they will then behave with the uttermost reservation and respect to each other. If two tribes have such a relationship to one another, it will normally also comprise their slaves, who will behave towards each other in the same fashion. If on the other hand two tribes have institutional joking with one another, as is the case with certain vassal tribes in relation to tribes of the *Iseḳḳemaren* class, there will also be joking between their slaves. There seems to be a strong tendency for the slaves to behave towards each other in a manner corresponding to that of their master.

In spite of the kinship pattern on which the relationships of Tuareg slaves and slave-owners is based, it is most noteworthy that there is always latent joking between them, as there is between many different classes and castes in Tuareg society. On certain occasions a Tuareg slave owner will joke freely even with his young or older slaves, though he will never joke with his children who have to show their father the outmost respect (cf. p. 454). Such a joking relationship is still more common between Tuareg and slaves who are not attached to one another by possession bonds. But it never exists between Tuareg and slaves who are not already known to each other.

The noble Tuareg may also joke with slaves but seem less inclined to do so than Tuareg of other classes. Apart from that, the relationship between noble Tuareg and slaves does not deviate from the description presented above. Noble Tuareg can marry slave women though they cannot easily marry Tuareg women of the vassal class. This may seem rather strange, but is in fact not so unusual as it might seem. We have stated above (p. 429 f.) that the reason why noble Tuareg and vassals could not

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565 567 ● 64 easily intermarry was to be looked for in the structure of the political system based upon the division of society into noble and vassal classes. A marriage between nobles and vassals would apparently tend to break down the political structure, but this would not be the case with a marriage between a noble Tuareg and a slave woman, for slaves are attached to the tribe of their masters as their "children" and play no part in political structure. Furthermore, if a noble Tuareg marries a slave-girl belonging to him, their children will also be able to adopt a noble status.